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ABSTRACT

This report describes a spring 1982 survey of faculty and student users and nonusers of library audiovisual collections at the State University of New York (SUNY)-Buffalo. User frequency, the composition of user patronage, preferred media formats for learning, and users' perceptions of audiovisual services offered are described. A brief history is provided of the Independent Learning Center (ILC), which houses the audiovisual collections at SUNY-Buffalo's E. H. Butler Library. Survey response rates for faculty (26 percent) and students (62 percent) are noted. Survey findings are presented, indicating that: (1) faculty use both the library and the ILC less frequently than students; (2) ILC collections are seen primarily as audiovisual "reserve rooms"; (3) many students and faculty are underutilizing media items available on loan from ILC; (4) student and faculty users have extremely positive attitudes about the ILC facility and its services; and (5) faculty (67 percent) still prefer learning by reading while students are more evenly divided among reading (41 percent), listening (38 percent), and viewing (31 percent). Based on survey results, active promotion of ILC services is recommended. The survey questionnaire is appended, with associated frequencies of response for students and faculty given for each question. (Author/ESR)

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ACADEMIC LIBRARY MEDIA USAGE: FACULTY AND STUDENT USE OF THE INDEPENDENT LEARNING CENTER

by

Susan P. Besemer

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Academic Library Media Usage:
Faculty and Student Use of the
Independent Learning Center

by Susan P. Besemer

The Independent Learning Center (ILC) is the audiovisual department in E.H. Butler Library, a medium-sized academic library in the largest of the four-year SUNY colleges. The Library has housed limited audiovisual resources and services since the mid-nineteen seventies. Initially, the operations were administered through the campus audiovisual production and equipment service, our sister agency, Instructional Resources. At that time, the Independent Learning Center served as an audiovisual "reserve room," staffed by paraprofessionals and students under the direction of professionals in another building. Audiocassettes, videocassettes, slides and a few items of realia were housed in the ILC with appropriate playback equipment. In 1976, the Library became the administrator of this service area. At that time several changes were instituted. The library's then small collection of audiovisual resources (mostly record discs and a few elementary curriculum media) were relocated to the room where the "new" ILC was placed. The AV reserve aspects continued, but added to them were such services as the circulation of library AV software, reference service, and in-house professional supervision. Over the next few years, the collection was enhanced by careful selection on the part of the librarians, and increased selection and collection building on the part of the teaching faculty, since some faculty became aware

that they could obtain audiovisual resources for the library, and hence for their teaching through purchases using their Acquisitions Allocation. Since 1976 AV materials not on reserve have circulated freely from the ILC. Our open stack policy permits browsing, and our pleasant room environment encourages students who come both to use AV materials and equipment, and to study. Our historically close relationship with Instructional Resources has allowed for consultation on equipment purchases, and twenty-four hour repair done by our sister agency. Since production facilities for AV materials are housed in Instructional Resources, the Independent Learning Center has only very modest production capabilities. A Visualmaker allows students to easily produce slides, and our "recording room" provides an opportunity for students to record on audio open-reel and cassette and to copy cassettes and open-reel tapes.

Because of these developments, the continuing growth of the collection of the Independent Learning Center, and the changing needs of both students and faculty at Buffalo State, in April 1982 the ILC Librarian undertook to study the faculty and student use of the facility and their perceptions regarding ILC services.

Before constructing the survey, a literature search was conducted to identify earlier user studies of AV media services in academic libraries. While numerous articles guide librarians to general user studies,[1] the search identified only a few citations similar to the proposed study.[2] One especially interesting citation appeared in the British journal <u>The Audiovisual Librarian</u>. As Sarah Greene indicates in the British journal, "It may well be that many academic libraries are

conducting useful studies for their own in-house needs, but the lack of any substantial published material in this field hinders the development of a comprehensive body of knowledge relating to audiovisual library management."[3] It is in this spirit that this paper outlines and discusses the ILC Survey as a start at doing user studies of AV service facilities in academic settings.

METHODOLOGY

The study was a broadly conceived evaluation of both student and faculty usage and perceptions. A self-administered questionnaire was developed to be distributed to students in four campus locations and mailed to all full-time faculty members. The development of the questionnaire sought to answer the basic questions of service in the ILC: Who uses it? When do they use it? How do they use it? What do they use? Why do they use it? Additionally it was hoped that some important data on non-users might be collected. To this end, questions were written, reviewed, revised, and finally printed in a leaflet format. The faculty form was identical to the student form except for the addition of two questions which were appended to the faculty form regarding the selection and ordering of non-print materials. Each question was preceded by a brief piece of information about ILC services and materials. (See Appendix) These facts were intended to refresh the memories of Independent Learning Center patrons, while raising the consciousness of non-users.

Faculty forms were mailed to the offices of all full-time faculty, with pre-addressed return labels to facilitate the return of the surveys. Of the five hundred faculty forms

distributed, 116 were returned completed. The survey was conducted in the last weeks of the Spring semester 1982. Perhaps faculty were immersed in other duties at that time, influencing the return rate. A better time for a mail-in survey would be just before or after mid-semester. In the future, a scientific randomly-sampled survey of faculty, with a more controlled return procedure is planned. The faculty's 26% response rate prevents any valid statistical inferences from being made on the basis of the returns, but, nonetheless allows for some useful observations regarding our services and facilities.

In choosing the locations for the distribution of the student forms, it was hoped to include non-users as well as users. On May 12, 1982 five hundred questionnaires were distributed to students at the following sites: 175 in the lobby of the Library, 85 in the ILC itself, 215 in the lobby of the Student Union and 25 in the campus Pub. The distribution, therefore, was aimed at being representative, but does not meet scientific standards for randomness. Of these 500 questionnaires, 313 were returned. This response rate of 62% seems quite healthy, considering the lack of control over returns in some locations.

After the surveys were received in the ILC, they were re-coded in machine-readable form by encoding the responses on optical scanning forms. Four hundred twenty-nine forms were completed. Once the responses were on disk, the data were analysed through the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).* This package has the capability to offer detailed

*The Academic Computing Center at SUCB was of tremendous assistance in this project. Thanks, in particular, are due Mary Ann Meyer and David Duff.

analysis and crosstabulation of the data, but in this instance only frequency tables and histograms were produced. The appendix lists the questions on the survey and their associated percentages of frequency for both students and faculty.

FINDINGS (Student Form)

Seventy per cent of the students polled had used the ILC at least once during the semester. They most frequently used it during the afternoons (34.9%) and weekends (46.2%). Fifty-eight per cent of the students had used reserve services -- primarily audio and video cassettes (88.6%). Nearly 68% of the students have not taken out any of the materials available for circulation from the ILC. The facility still seems to be seen primarily as an audiovisual "reserve room." Only 13.2% of the students polled had attended a class presentation.

While students seem to be under-utilizing the ILC services, their attitudes regarding the facility and the services are extremely positive. Virtually every student checked at least one of the positve additude responses "competent," "friendly", and/or "helpful," while only 4.6% selected either "unfriendly" or "incompetent." And 35.3% checked the comment "I like everything about the ILC."

"Providing instructional materials to students" was perceived as the major purpose of the ILC (75.2%), while over fifty percent of the students polled also felt that the ILC should "provide instructional materials for faculty" (58.6%), "provide reference services for AV materials" (54.2%) and "provide a place to preview AV resources" (50.2%). Students claimed that they would use the ILC more if it were opened all regular library hours

(41.4%) but with the current budget situation, it is unlikely that we would be able to staff such coverage. The question regarding learning styles elicited some very important and interesting data. The percentage which cited "reading" as their preferred way of learning was only 41.1%. This was followed closely by "listening" (37.9%) and "viewing" (30.5%). These statistics certainly reinforce the need for providing audiovisual resources in the library, since fewer than 50% of the present students queried chose reading as their preferred way of learning.

Overall, the students who responded indicated a positive perception of the ILC, but a limited awareness of its resources and services. It appears that a more active outreach program is needed to raise the consciousness of students about the ILC.

FINDINGS (Faculty Form)

Faculty use the Library less frequently than do students. Their most frequent response to the Library use question was "once a week" (42.1%) compared to 39.7% "daily" and 42% "weekly" on the student form. Faculty also use the ILC less frequently than do the students. Forty-one per cent of those faculty who responded indicated that they had never used the ILC. Of the faculty who use the ILC, the most frequently cited time was "afternoons" (35.9%). About half of the faculty had used either audiocassette or videocassette equipment in the ILC. Again, in spite of limited usage, the perception by the faculty of the ILC seems very positive. An even higher percentage than students selected positive attitude responses. No one selected the

response "unfriendly" and only one person of the 116 respondents selected the "incompetent" choice on this question. More faculty than students are aware of the circulating materials in the ILC. Twenty-nine per cent of the faculty had used the ILC "to get items to check out" while only 16.9% of the students had used the ILC in this way. The purposes of the ILC selected by faculty were basically those listed by students: providing instructional materials for students (71.3%) and faculty (75.9%) and to provide reference service (58.3%). No other "purposes" choices received more than 50% of the faculty responses. The ILC hours do not seem to be a deterrent to the faculty's use of the ILC. Only 7.5% selected this as a reason that they do not use the room more. More faculty (35.2%) than students (27.9%) checked that they would use the facility more if they remembered it when they needed it.

Not surprisingly, faculty prefer to learn through reading. But, more surprising is the fact that 18.5% selected "listening" and 26.9% selected "viewing" as a preferred learning style. Even among well-educated and traditional users, it appears, audiovisual ways of learning are important and appropriate.

While nearly 51% of the responding faculty stated that they had recommended an item of audiovisual software for purchase, a large 21.9% were unaware that AV materials could be bought for the Library through their library allocation.

SUMMARY

Overall, the view of the ILC by students and faculty who use the ILC is clearly favorable. The need for improvement seems more pressing in terms of outreach and consciousness-raising than

it does in adding services or in performing better. Improved outreach efforts are planned during the current year. The Academic Services Committee of our Faculty Senate has expressed an interest in assisting the Library in making these services better known to faculty and staff members. Other plans to reach more of the student population include active promotion of the facility in the Student Union and in the lobby of the Library. The success of these efforts will be measured by repeating this survey, or by constructing another similar one, in one or two years.

The experience of constructing, administering, analysing, and interpreting the survey was an interesting one. Devising plans for improved services and increased community awareness of our facility and services is an exciting and challenging task. As Sarah Greene suggests, by audiovisual librarians sharing our findings about our services and our users, we in this profession can learn from each other and increase our overall effectiveness.

REFERENCES

[1]One of the very best of these is the following article which offers a step-by-step approach to conducting a user study: Meredith Butler and Bonnie Gratch, "Planning a User Study: The Process Defined," College and Research Libraries 43: 320-29 (Jul 1982).

[2]Carl Clayton, "AV at Charing Cross Hospital Medical School: A Survey of Use," The Audiovisual Librarian 7:35-37 (1981).

[3]Sarah Greene, "Thoughts on Audiovisual User Studies," The Audiovisual Librarian 6:61-2 (1980).

APPENDIX:

TABULATED RESPONSES FROM FACULTY (N=116) AND STUDENTS (N=313)

Butler Library's Independent Learning Center (ILC) is the Library's audiovisual collection. The ILC (located in Library room 318) is surveying user needs in order to serve you better. Please take a few minutes to give us your point of view by checking ALL of the responses which represent your thinking. You may choose more than one answer on some questions.

THANKS from the ILC STAFF!

1. This semester I have used the Library:

FACULTY		STUDENT
10.5%	daily	39.7%
42.1%	once a week	42 %
36.8%	once a month	14.7%
7.9%	once this semester	1.6%
2.6%	never	2 %

2. This semester I've used the ILC

FACULTY		STUDENT
1.7%	daily	8 %
13 %	once a week	24 %
22.6%	once a month	22.7%
20.9%	once this semester	15.7%
41.7%	never	29.7%

3. The ILC is open 7 days a week. I generally use the ILC:

FACULTY		STUDENT
18.4%	mornings	14 %
35.9%	afternoons	34.9%
1.9%	evenings	16.9%
8.8%	weekends	46.2%
43.7%	I don't use it	31.1%

4. The ILC has large numbers of AV items on Reserve for course assignments. In the past semester I have used the ILC for Reserve listening or viewing assignments:

FACULTY		STUDENT
67.6%	never	41.7%
20.4%	once or twice	26.9%
6.5%	once a month	13.7%
.9%	once a week	15.5%
4.6%	daily	2.2%

5. The ILC has materials in all subject areas. I'm most interested in materials about:

FACULTY		STUDENT
18.1%	the arts	28.8%
23.4%	the humanities	17.9%
33.6%	the social sciences	18.8%
15 %	the natual sciences	8.6%
17.9	business and technology	25 %
35.5%	education	19.1%

6. Students may check out materials for two weeks at a time and renew these materials once, making a total possible loan period of 1 month. This length of time is:

FACULTY		STUDENT
24.7%	too long	12.1%
2.1%	too short	5.9%
73.3%	about right	82 %

7. Faculty members may check out materials for one month or for one semester if they request it. This length of time is:

FACULTY		STUDENT
15 %	too long	43.5%
1 %	too short	3.9%
84 %	about right	52.7%

8. The ILC has much audiovisual equipment available for in-room use. Please check the kind(s) of equipment which you have used in the ILC:

FACULTY		STUDENT
26.4%	audiocassette	56.6%
25.2%	videocassette player	32 %
10.2%	record player	15.6%
17.6%	filmstrip viewer	15.1%
6.5%	other	4.2%
50.9%	I haven't used any equipment there	21.9%

9. In using the ILC equipment, I have felt:

FACULTY		STUDENT
2 %	afraid that I might break something	5.2%
23 %	OK, but glad to have help	24.2%
20 %	confident to use it on my own	46.7%
0 %	carefree. If it breaks, it breaks	2 %
55 %	I haven't used it	21.9%

10. The ILC has materials on all age levels. I generally use materials for the following age-level:

FACULTY		STUDENT
7.4%	preschool	2.3%
16 %	elementary	7.6%
11.1%	secondary	2.6%
46.7%	college	62.1%
16.2%	adult	16.5%
35.2%	I don't use the ILC	23.9%

11. The ILC has numerous kits, cassettes, filmstrips, and transparencies that can be used for class presentations. I've checked out the following for in-class presentations:

FACULTY		STUDENT
18.5%	kits	5.2%
20.4%	filmstrips	8.5%
8.3%	transparencies	2.6%
24.3%	cassettes	15.9%
1.9%	charts or pictures	5.2%
53.7%	I haven't checked things out	66.7%

12. The ILC has over 2600 records. I have taken out the following kinds of records:

FACULTY		STUDENT
18.5%	classical	10.6%
4.7%	jazz	12.9%
.9%	rock	11.9%
7.4%	children's records	2.2%
6.5%	other	3.2%
67.6%	I haven't taken out ILC records	66 %

13. The ILC charges students $.20 per day per item for things which are overdue. This charge is:

FACULTY		STUDENT
2 %	too much	19.9%
26.5%	too little	5.6%
71.6%	fair enough	74.4%

14. The ILC seer itself as being service-oriented. Staff in the ILC seems to me to be:

FACULTY		STUDENT
43.5%	competent	32.9%
44.4%	helpful	58.6%
27.8%	interested	16.6%
.0%	unfriendly	3.6%
.9%	incompetent	1 %
34.6%	I haven't used the ILC	18.1%

15. The ILC presently serves several functions. Please check any of the following ways in which you have used the ILC:

FACULTY		STUDENT
8.3%	as a place to study	48.9%
2.8%	to listen to my own records or tapes	11.7%
7.4%	to use the visual-maker or calculators	14.9%
29.9%	to get items to check out	16.9%
4.6%	other--please specify	9.1%
37.4%	I haven't used the ILC	17.7%

16. The ILC offers Library Instruction classes on using AV materials in various subjects. I've attended a class presentation in the ILC:

FACULTY		STUDENT
91.3%	never	86.8%
3.9%	once	7.6%
2.9%	twice	2.3%
1.9%	more than twice	3.3%

17. I think that the purpose(s) of the ILC should be:

FACULTY		STUDENT
71.3%	to provide instructional materials to faculty	58.6%
75.9%	to provide instructional materials to students	75.2%
24.1%	to provide recreational AV materials to the campus community	45.8%
48.1%	to provide a place to play to records, tapes, films, etc.	50.2%
36.1%	to assist students in making AV materials	41 %
18.7	to provide film programs or media-related guest speakers	38.9%
58.3%	to provide reference service regarding AV materials	54.2%

18. What I like best about the ILC is its:

FACULTY		STUDENT
42.6%	materials	54.2%
25 %	atmosphere	34 %
30.6%	service	24.6%
28 %	I don't use the ILC	19.4%
.9%	other	3.3%
5.6%	I don't like anything about the ILC	2.3%

19. What I like least about the ILC is its:

FACULTY		STUDENT
1.9%	materials	8.5%
4.7%	atmosphere	8.9%
1.9%	service	5.9%
31.5%	I don't use the ILC	21.3%
5.6%	other	11.8%
21.3%	I like everything about the ILC	35.3%

20. I would use the ILC more:

FACULTY		STUDENT
7.5%	if it were open all regular Library hours	41.4%
35.2%	if I remembered it when I needed it	27.9%
15.9%	if there were more materials	10.8%
12.9%	if there were better materials	8.1%
1.9%	if I knew where it was located	9.3%
4.6%	if things weren't always "out"	8.1%
3.7%	I have no interest in using the ILC	8.8%

21. I am a(n):

FACULTY		STUDENT
1.9%	undergraduate student	92.1%
.0%	graduate student	5.6%
97.2%	faculty member	1 %
.9%	administrator	.7%
.0%	other	.7%

22. My preferred way of learning is by:

FACULTY		STUDENT
67.6%	reading	41.1%
18.5%	listening	37.9%
26.9%	viewing	30.5%
42.5%	practical experience	52 %

23. Faculty members may request the purchase of audiovisual resources through their library budget allocation. I have helped build the ILC's collections in this way:

FACULTY		STUDENT
49.4%	never	____
30.6%	once or twice	____
20 %	frequently	____
21.9%	I was unaware that the library allocation could be used in this way	____